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## 8. NEST BUILDING ACTIVITIES OF THE FLAMINGO (*PHOENICOPTERUS ROSEUS*) AT SHAHWADI (AHMEDABAD)

The flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) is a resident, nomadic, locally migratory or extralimital migrant in part, for the Indian subcontinent (Ali and Ripley 1983), with a famous breeding ground at the Flamingo City, about 12 km from the Nir Bet outpost in the Great Rann of Kutch (Hussain 1991). It is known to breed in thousands depending upon the actual conditions of inundation of its breeding ground in the Rann (Himmatsinhji 1991).

The nesting of the greater flamingo was observed near Shahwadi, a suburb located on the outskirts of southern Ahmedabad in 1992<sup>1</sup>. The study area is, a part of the wasteland which is filled either with rain water or the waste water of nearby industrial (mainly textile) units. These units release their effluents into the village ponds, canals and agricultural fields, replacing the fields by temporary/permanent pools of alkaline waters and fallow land, thus unintentionally creating habitat for flamingos.

From April 1992, to the first week of August 1992, a colony of flamingo, comprising hundreds of individuals, was found at Shahwadi. There were no juveniles. The variation in the population of the flamingo at Shahwadi can be seen in Table 1. The number of flamingos in the colony was reduced considerably by the end of July. In the second week of August, the colony was abandoned. However, a few individuals stayed at Shahwadi even after the emigration of their colony from Shahwadi. The variation in the

number of such stray individuals is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
NUMBERS OF THE GREATER FLAMINGOS AT  
SHAHWADI (AHMEDABAD)

Date of Count (1992)	Number of Flamingos	Remarks
19th April	662	Total count
25th May	1000	Estimate
3rd July	755	Total count, One lesser flamingo present
12th July	730	Total count
26th July	425	Total count
2nd August	300	Total count
9th August	nil	Colony abandoned
13th August	2	Adults, feeding
23rd August	13	Adults, all feeding
7th September	11	Adults, all feeding
13th September	11	Adults, all feeding
25th September	8	Adults, all feeding
27th September	nil	Stray individual might have departed
10th November	nil	Stray individuals, might have departed

Nesting Activities: From 3rd July to 2nd August, 1992, 10 flamingos were found displaying and nesting. Observations on construction activities of these individuals accompanied by the breeding display confirmed the mud structures as nests. We were aware of the flamingo's habit of constructing feeding mounds which are superficially suggestive of their breeding colonies (Abdulali 1964).

<sup>1</sup>The author had photographed the "nest" mounds but the photographs are not of printable quality

Observations on nests and nesting activities:

- i) About twelve mounds of mud were present amidst the shallow water.
- ii) Of these, about nine were clustered together, whereas others were located away from the cluster.
- iii) The spot where the cluster of nests was located, was not densely covered with grasses, hedges or other macrophytic vegetation.
- iv) Some of the nests were conical in shape while others were cylindrical. The shape of a few mounds was irregular. Depression at the top of the nests (concave and cylindrical) could not be seen because we did not approach the nests closely to avoid disturbance.
- v) On nests, individuals were found either sitting, standing, displaying or busy shaping the nests.

Nest construction: Standing on top of the nest, the flamingo moved its beak on the top of the nest, describing an arc, it also moved its beak along the flank of the nest in linear up and down manner. To shape the nest with its legs, it would stand on top of the nest, the neck would be bent

down so that the beak was brought in contact with the top of the nest. Then, with the beak as a centre (pivot) the bird would move the beak along the rim at the top. During this circular movement it was seen trampling or pressing down the top of the nest by raising its feet one after another.

About two to eleven individuals were present at Shahwadi on different occasions after the emigration of their colony (Table 1). One can rightly doubt that the individuals staying behind at Shahwadi, even after the departure of the colony, would breed at the site. However, from 13th August to 25th September, neither nest shaping nor breeding display were observed among these birds. They were remarkably silent and always busy feeding in the rapidly drying waters. They were always seen away from the nests. Moreover, the birds were absent on subsequent visits on 27th September and 10th November, 1992.

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### 9. CONTAMINATION IN EGG SHELLS OF HIMALAYAN GREYHEADED FISHING EAGLE *ICHTHYOPHAGA NANA PLUMBEA* IN CORBETT NATIONAL PARK, INDIA

A study of the breeding biology of resident raptors of Corbett National Park, Uttar Pradesh, India was undertaken during the years 1990 to 1993. The Park is situated in the lower Himalayan foothills known as the Sivaliks within the Bhabar tract, between 29° 31' and 29° 35' N, lat.,

70° 41' E. long. According to Ali and Ripley (1978), the Himalayan greyheaded fishing eagle *Ichthyophaga nana plumbea* extends from the lower foothills upto 2400 m, optimally between 1000 to 1500 m in western Himalayas and under 1000 m in the eastern Himalayas. The middle